

Please do not steal this story, God is watching.

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Denny / HYSTG's Note: Pardon the grammar, I did not take time to edit this and I admit my tenses suck. I know my English is not very good at all but just bear with it. Okehh?XD

"So you're dying, what's your plan now?"

"I'll bargain 10 important people with God."

"Huh? Bargain? What do you mean?"

"I'll collect 10 signatures and pass the contract to God when I meet Him."

"I don't get you."

"I hope God does."

10 Signatures to Bargain with God

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You can't stay forever...

You don't live always...

You are limited...

There is a finishing line.

But after the line, *is the beginning*.

It takes 10 signatures.

[Introduction to the Contract]

It's normal that people die, people leave. Yet the normality we can't accept. We often say to ourselves, "I want a normal life" but a lot of us doesn't even know what *normal* means in life. We're all abnormal in our way of thinking.

I am abnormal.

"What's on your mind?"

I switch back to reality when I heard his voice. I turn my head to his direction and give him a defeated

smile, "Mamamatay na ako diba?"

He twitches for a second then he pats my head, "It's normal."

What I like about him is he doesn't give me lies just to comfort me. What's the point of telling someone *everything's gonna be alright* if it's not, right? He comforts me honestly. The truth hurts but the lies are worse.

"Should I believe your father?" his father is the one who told me that I only have 2 weeks or less to live, his father is my doctor.

"I don't know, my biological father is not a God. But our Father is." he points up with his forefinger. I know who he is talking about.

We're Catholics but the thing is, I am not such a good Catholic. I don't go to Sunday mass neither do I pray or genuflect when I pass by the church. I don't have the Catholic attitude but I do believe that there is someone up there that owns us, my parents told me that when I was little. We call him God.

"If I believe in Him, it only means that I should also believe that these current events in my life are normal."

"Of course. Dying is normal."

I have not expected those words, *dying is normal*. He even said it abruptly.

I raise my feet and place it on the bench where we are sitting, I hug it tightly laying my head on my knees, without looking at him I said, "Are you telling me that I should accept everything? That I'm really dying?"

He places his hand around my shoulder and kisses the top of my head, "I did not say you'll have to accept it, what I'm saying is... do not be afraid of it."

Thoughts flushes in my mind crazily, I find it hard to comprehend with my own thoughts. I put down my feet then face my boyfriend and hug him tightly. I've decided something...

"Can I change my birthday to today's date?"

"Moses split the ocean into two so changing your birthday doesn't seem impossible. What are you planning, baby?"

I start crying and sobbing into his shirt, "I want to live, for the first time."

"February 25, 2010 at 3.46pm, happy birthday!" After my boyfriend said that, I blew the candle of my cake. I'm

celebrating my first birthday in his room, in his bed. After the scene on the bench, he brought me to the nearest church and pleaded a priest to baptize me again while I was still crying. Though we did not ask the legal papers to be changed, with the baptism I already feel like new to the world.

"Can I give my present some other day?"

"Are you kidding me? There's no need for a present, you're more than enough." I suddenly pull him closer to me and snuggle him, because of that we fell on his bed. Fortunately the cake was placed in the small table before we fell so it was safe from being ruined.

He pulls away some strands of hair that was messily placed on my face and he places it on the back of my ear, "What did you wish for?"

"Memories."

"That's cool, am I part of it?"

"Of course, your signature is on my list."

"What signature? What list?" I can see how confused his face is, I don't know if I can explain this well to him but I'll try since I've decided of this already...

"Do you remember last summer's youthcamp?"

He nods completely fixed in confusion.

"Do you remember what one of the pastors said on the 4th night?"

This time he responds, "Uhh... yeah but I remember it vaguely. He was talking about something about the life in heaven or... ah, I don't remember at all."

"The pastor said that when you die, only your soul comes back to heaven."

"Which means?"

"If it's only our souls it means we don't bring anything with us even memories..."

"Huh?"

"The pastor also said that when our souls meet in heaven, we'll know each other on that moment but we would not remember what relations we had on Earth. We are promised to be filled with joys in Heaven and to fulfill that, we have to leave our memories here on Earth which are full of sufferings and sadness. The happy memories aren't even an exception, when you die you leave everything behind."

Silence proceeds.

I can hear the ticking of his wall clock. Tick, tick, tick. It has the same rhythm with my heartbeat.

"So you're dying, what's your plan now?"

"I would like to gain my birthday wish."

"Meaning?"

"I'll collect memories."

"You said that according to last summer's youthcamp's pastor, when we die we only bring our souls with us, we leave everything behind even the memories. So...?"

"I'm not confident with this but I think... I'll bargain 10 important people with God."

"Huh? Bargain? What do you mean?"

"I'll collect 10 signatures and pass the contract to God when I meet Him."

"Signatures and a contract? Bargaining with God? What are you saying, I don't get you."

I close my eyes and pray, "I hope God does."

"And for the 10th signature..." I am in my room, in front of my study table writing the 10th signature owner on a piece of bond paper that I have claimed to call "The Contract". When I have finished writing the last name, I raise the paper and look at it for a minute and I let off a determined and hopeful smile.

I place the paper on the table and I stand up from my seat as I take out my phone from my pocket and started searching a name in my phonebook. When I've found it, I click the call button and it feels like my heartbeat is louder than the phone's rings.

Ring, ring, ring...

Someone picks it up after 5 or 6 rings. It has been a long time. I wonder if this person still remembers me...

"Hello?"

"Your voice never changed."

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[First Signature]

"Where are you going, anak?!" upon entering my room, my mom is surprised too see me in my jeans, jacket and rubber shoes. My outfit clearly says that I'm going out.

"Mom, I need to go to the park."

Because I have an old friend waiting for me...

"At a time like this?!"

"Oh please mom, don't exaggerate. It's only 7 o'clock in the evening."

"No, you can't go. It's already late. Change your clothes." my mom turns her back on me and is about to leave my room, I run to her and hold her arm.

"Mom." she stops, not facing me.

"Can I go? Please?" I insisted.

"No."

I pout at her response, "Not fair! You usually allow me to go outside at this hour and even late!"

"Don't you understand the situation?!" inbetween her lines, I hear her sob. I don't know if she's crying, I can't see her face neither her tears. I try to turn her to face me and my thought is confirmed, my mom is crying *again*.

No, not again but always. My mom is always crying since she knew about my sickness and due date. Why does the thought of dying makes a person cry? I want to know, what is the saddest thing about death? What is there to cry about death? What is? Why? **Questions**.

I embrace my mother and whisper to her ear, "I don't understand the situation and I'm not trying to understand it anymore. It might sound that I'm weary of all of these and I'm like giving up but I'll tell you the truth mom, I'm not dying."

She pushes me a little because she is taken aback from my words, "You're not dying?! The doctor just said..."

"I just started living life so how come I'm dying? I will die but I'm not dying, mom. Please do remember that."

"What... what are you saying? I don't understand. You're confusing me! Stop using unfathomable phrases!"

I wipe the tears on mom's cheek and kiss the tip of her nose, "Mom, please let me go tonight? Please?"

"I just said you can't---"

"Do you remember when I was in sixth grade, you and dad asked me what happened to me and my bestfriend back then?" I paused, took a breath and continue, "For my response, I told you guys that people grow old and meet other friends. After that, you didn't ask me anything anymore. If you'll ask me the same question again, I'll tell you a different answer."

"What's the sense of this?"

"Just ask me the same question again, Mom. Ask me what happened to me and my bestfriend back then."

Mom hesitates, looks directly in my eyes then to the wall and looks back into my eyes again. "W-what happened to you and her? Why didn't I see you guys hanging out anymore?"

"I bullied her."

Thick and clear. My words are nothing but guilt and regret.

"I---" mom can't even continue her word, she covers her mouth with her right hand in astonishment.

"I'm a bad girl mom, a bad friend. I want to understand why I did such things so please, let me go. Please, mom. Please."

"Are you meeting her tonight?"

I nod, "After 8yrs."

"Then go."

I place my hands inside my jacket's pocket as I walk to the park. I look up the sky, it's a full moon with lots of stars around it. The wind is blowing hard , I'm glad I had my hair tied upwards because if not, the wind will just undo my hair and it'll be really annoying. It's so quiet and calm here in the park only the rustling of the leaves can be heard, there is no one here. At a time like this, people are usually in their houses eating dinner or doing their assigned works, or maybe others are having a party. Who knows.

I've decided to settle myself in one of the benches here, I start playing with my fingers as I wait for her.

Hello?

Your voice never changed.

Who are you?

I was a friend.

Huh?

Don't you recognize my voice?

Is it you....

It's me, your former bestfriend.

I don't remember having a bestfriend.

Then, can we get to know each other and become bestfriends? I'll meet you at the park tomorrow at 8pm. I would really want to be friends with you.

When I called her and she recognized that it was me on the other line, her sweet voice changed in a sour one. I can't blame her, even if it has already been 8years, the wound I gave her will always remain a wound. I left a scar in her heart, I don't know how to remove it. I asked her to meet me here and I'm not really sure if she'll come but I do hope she will because I'm here to ask forgiveness.

Tick, tock, tick...

It's 10pm already, is she coming or not?

My hope of her coming begins to waver. I cross my fingers and keep chanting that, "She'll come. She'll come. She'll come."

After another half hour, I decide to stand up from my seat. I walk back and forth in front of the bench with my fingers still crossed and kept on chanting. I feel so fidgety.

I stop. I decide to pull out my cellphone from my jacket's pocket and dial her number.

As soon as I've heard the ringing of the other line, another sound plays somewhere near me.

[For better imagination, please play: One friend by Dan Seals]

*I always thought you were the best
I guess I always will
I always thought that we were blessed
And I feel that way still
Sometimes we took the hard road
But we always saw it through*

I start searching the place, I know that song. It was our favorite song, it was our graduation song in elementary!

*If I had only one friend left
I'd want it to be you*

*Sometimes the world was on our side
Sometimes it wasn't fair
Sometimes it gav---*

"Oh no!" the music stops but after that I heard a panicky voice that came from one of the bushes near at my left side. I turn my head to that direction and from the moon's reflection, I see her standing near a tree with a troubled face while she is holding her phone.

"H-hi!" she said stammering and embarrassed.

*Sometimes it gave a helping hand
Sometimes we didn't care*

*'Cause when we were together
It made the dream come true*

*If I had only one friend left
I'd want it to be you*

Someone who understands me

I run towards her, jump to her and hug her tightly. We both fell on the floor, crying.

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry!" I keep on saying while my crying face is buried on her chest. I felt her touch on my back and her hug tightens.

"Do you even know how hard it was to decide whether to go to that bench and talk to you or just go back home? I was already here when you arrived and for the last 3hrs, I've been hesitating to show myself to you!" she's shouting to the top of her lungs, I don't know what emotions she has because I am too filled with my own feelings to even recognize other's.

"I'm sorry for being so mean to you way back then. I was just afraid to be bullied too. I'm sorry for being selfish and leaving you all alone. I'm really sorry, I had been such a kid."

"Sssh. We were only 12 back then, so it's acceptable. It's more likely to think of ourselves when were kids but I guess that we're not kids anymore, you're not like that from the past anymore right?" she pulls me away from her and holds me in my face looking directly in my eyes filled with tears like hers.

"Yes, I still am. I still think of myself and I'm still selfish but I will never commit the same mistake again. I never succeeded in finding someone like you..."

*And knows me inside out
Helps keep me together
And believes without a doubt,
That I could move a mountain
Someone to tell it to*

*If I had only one friend left
I'd want it to be you*

*Someone
And knows me inside out
Helps keep me together
And believes without a doubt,
That I could move a mountain
Someone to tell it to*

"Can we both stop searching? It's more than impossible to find our replicates." she smiles at me. A smile that brings all hope in my heart.

"Am I forgiven?"

"Long ago. I've only been waiting for you to call me but you never did and I'm glad yesterday night, you've finally decided to patch things up. I miss hugging you like this, I miss you, my bestfriend."

We hug each other again, stayed down there in the bushes crying while the moon becomes the witness of our mending friendship.

*If I had only one friend left
I'd want it to be you*

Even if it was that late, we decided to enjoy the night to a 24/7 karaoke bar and sung our hearts out in the karaoke. We enjoyed it so much that we almost forgot the time. We decided to walk home together at around 1.17am. Since her house is nearer than mine, I am the one to accompany her to her house and walk back home alone.

"Are you sure you can go back home alone? Don't you think it'll be too dangerous?" she says as she opens the gate of her house, "If you want you can stay here or I'll ask dad to give you a ride back home."

"That'll be great but I think I'll just walk back home alone. Thanks anyway." I refused.

"Well then, I'll be heading. Goodnight and Bye."

"Goodnight to you too." she closes the door, turns her back and starts walking to her house but before she could reach

the door of their house, I stop her, "Wait!"

She turns to me, "Yes?"

I pull out a folded paper and a small pen from my jean's pocket, "Can you sign this?"

She walks back to the gate and opens it, "What is it?"

I unfolded the paper to the part of her name and show it to her, "I need your signature."

"For what?"

"I'm collecting signatures."

"For what?" she repeats her question while she starts signing it. "Here."

"Thank you. It's a secret, you'll know in the near future." :3

"Oh! A secret, huh? I'll be looking forward to it. Well then, goodnight again! See you!"

"Bye bye!" she returns to her house, closes the door and I start walking back to my house.

*"Oh! A secret, huh? I'll be looking forward to it. Well then, goodnight again! **See you!**"*

I don't know when we would see each other again. As of now, *bye bye*.

I take a look to the contract, folded it and put it back inside my jean's pocket.

9 more signatures and I feel this weak already.

| 2nd signature |

"So how was it, baby?"

"Know what, a normal human will find this bargaining sad and desperate but for me, I find it riveting." then I smile at him,

"Baby, I'm crazy am I not?"

He pinches my nose, "Sometimes I want to believe that my dad was joking about your findings."

"Hey, hey. What if he's really joking?"

"Yeah, right." we both laugh at a very stupid conversation.

We're seated on a hammock in our backyard. I told him about the first signature and he kept on asking me who're the others but I kept his curiosity intact.

"So, will I be able to sign that contract too?"

"Hmm," my tone is insinuating, "Sorry to say but there werent any space anymore."

The usual sensitive him wears the universal scowl and I then burst out laughing as I pat his arm, "I'm just kidding!"

"Why you!" I run away from him as he tries to tickle me. We run around in circle like crazy.

"Risa!" we only stopped when mom saw us, "You shouldn't be running like that!"

She gets a face towel and starts wiping my sweat like I'm some 5year old kiddo.

"Mom!" I said kinda abashed, "Stop it, a little sweat won't kill."

"Fine! Go sweat but dont die!"

Mom stomps in the house and left us. I face my boyfriend and whisper to his ear, "Baby, help me escape on the night of the reunion party. I want to go, mom won't let me."

I am talking about our school's reunion party, there'll be a reunion party tomorrow to meet our old highschool friends

which happens to be my college friends as well though I did not really have the chance to finish college because of my sickness. No one in my former class knows about why I suddenly left school even my teachers don't have any idea, I gave them no clue and did not contact them anymore. I was stuck in the hospital and did not have any chance to see them anymore, I did not allow visits since I don't want anyone to know about this monster inside me. I miss them, I miss my friends, I miss my teachers. I miss going to the place I once hated to go, I miss going to school.

They all graduated without me and now there's a reunion party. For the last time, I want to see them and set foot in my beloved alma mater.

"Sure babe, I'll take you with me tomorrow night."

My boyfriend's also going there since he's also my classmate. We went to the same school since elementary. Yes, we've been together for that long. Aren't we that inextricable?

"I love you, baby." I'm thankful to God for giving me a beguiling boyfriend.

I gasped, heaved and vomit again.

"Are you sure, you can do it?" my boyfriend asked me in such worried face.

"Maybe?" I smiled weakly, "No, not maybe --- I can do it. Let's go."

He looks distracted, "If anything happens to you, I'm gonna kill you. Seriously speaking here."

"Haha, is that suppose to threaten me? Come on, let's go now before mom notices us." as for the plan of sneaking out, we're gonna use my bedroom window to escape. My room's on the second floor but it's not that high so we tied & knotted 3 long blankets together to get us some good slide down escape from my room. I'm surely gonna be scolded after this but who cares, getting scolded is something that drifts away fast from our minds but the regrets will be hard to remove.

I prefer to be scolded than to feel regrets in my heart.

"I feel so anxious." I said as I hold on to my boyfriend when we entered the school.

I feel like trembling, setting foot again here gives me nostalgia. The school, even small, seems so big to me. There are too many lights, too many people I can't recognize.

"Baby, we're back." he gave me a reassuring smile, "Our second home."

Lots of things changed, my favorite bench isn't there anymore. The trashcans were not on their proper places anymore. The buildings got painted. The old offices are now classrooms. Where are the comfort rooms? They are on the other side of the school now? Who are these guards, I don't know them. The teachers? A lot of them changed. Since when did our school have a statue there?

Almost everything changed. Time passed by that fast and left me without even a word.

"Hey!" someone suddenly approached us, "You guys! Its you right? Wow. It's been a long time. You guys are still together? This is so cool!"

Then one by one as we come near to the center part of the event, I am able to recognize people that were approaching us --- my former classmates.

"Ohgosh, it's reall you! You just dropped out of the school without a word!"

"Hey, I missed you girl! What happened?"

"Hey, I thought you were abducted by the aliens! You just disappeared one day and we didnt have any news about you after!"

"This is so good to be true, girl you don't know how much I missed you! I cried when you did not show yourself anymore! I was worried!"

"Back then, everyone in the class was asking the teachers and even the principal about you! We wanted to know what happened to you but no one knew. That was so sad!"

"Hey hey guys, calm down." I smiled at them, they were like in chaos shooting words to me that I myself can't even comprehend anymore, "I'm sorry about my sudden disappearance. I kinda left school for some private reasons and hope you guys would understand. I can't tell you the reasons why but hey the reason doesn't matter anymore. Atleast I'm back right? I missed you guys, instead of telling you something about me why don't you guys narrate something to me about those days?"

They recounted me everything of the old days they had. It seems so fun, I wish I was there with them at those times. I wish I was with them... I wish....

"Please excuse me guys, I have to go to the toilet" I left them on the table and my boyfriend accompanied me to the toilet as I vomit again. He doesn't mind if he's entering the girl's comfort room, he doesn't mind if people are staring at him. He's too worried about me to worry about himself.

"I think the night's over, baby. Let's head back home?" he suggested as he pats my back to ease my vomiting pains.

I give up, I must admit that I'm already having trouble with breathing. I really should rest now, the night's over.

"Yeah. Just one more thing, accompany me to our former adviser. I need to give him something."

"Mr. Reyes," our former adviser in highschool almost had a hard time recognizing who I was, "Can you please read this to the class later?"

I hand him a folded letter, "What's this?"

"Something important sir, it's a message from me to the class."

"Uhh, why in a letter?"

"I prefer writing it than saying it. This is a favor sir, last favor so I hope you wouldn't mind. And oh sir, please sign something," I take out the contract from my small bag and also a pen.

"Sign? Why?"

"I'm collecting signatures sir, some sort of memory collecting. Well, it's not like I can ask the whole class to sign it so as the representative sir please sign here." I showed him only the part where he should sign and the rest of the contract, I had it folded so he won't see what it's about.

"Well, if that's the case." he then signs on the contract and I waved him goodbye.

A letter to my teachers and to my classmates,

This is so ironic, I remember that once my english teacher asked the whole class to write an essay with a certain theme of "What I want to happen before dying", I kinda did not take it seriously. I just wrote there that I want to eat all the foods I want to eat before dying.

But I am now rewriting that essay, this is now the real essay. I want to tell you guys what I want to happen before dying.

I won't change my essay way back then, I still do want to eat all the foods I want to eat before dying but I would want to add some few things.

Before dying, I want to get married -- of course, to my everloving boyfriend. I am a hopeless romantic, you know that guys.

Before dying, I want to see my friends and have a nice chitchat with them. Playing back the nostalgias.

Before dying, I want to say sorry to everyone I have hurt. I want to make peace with my enemies. I want to be forgiven with my sins.

Before dying, I want to sing on a karaoke bar which I have never done in my life since I'm very shy with my singing talent.

Before dying, I want to go the cinema and watch a film together with my whole family.

Before dying, I want to hug my brother and my sister and tell them to enjoy their lives and take care of themselves. And to tell my little brother to take care of my little sister as they grow up, to tell him to protect his little sister from bad guys who would want to break her heart.

Before dying, I want to buy a seed and to make a plant grow.

Before dying, I want to shout in the center of the city that I have lived life to the fullest.

Before dying, I want to pray to God and thank Him for everything.

Before dying...

I don't know what to add anymore, I have lots in mind. And a lot more to come maybe and if I enumerate everything, it'll take tomorrow to finish this essay.

Well, this letter is not really about me... it's actually about you guys.

First of all, I would want to thank my teachers for everything. I want to thank you for annoying, boring me out, confusing

me, giving me headaches with those lessons to study. I'll surely miss those times that I panic everytime there's a surprise quiz. I'll also miss the times that I get a low grade and you guys scold me for not studying hard. Thanks teachers for your kind concern, I know you were only strict to us because you want us to have a better future. You teachers are one of the best type of people here in this world, you nourish us students to be a better person. You taught us not just something there is on the books but also what there is in life. You are my second parents, thank you second moms and dads. I love you, keep on giving a brighter future to your second sons and daughters.

Thank you also to my classmates, need I say more? You are a mix of everything. A total chaos that I enjoyed the most. Sometimes we fight for some silly things like who did not clean on the cleaner's schedule, who was on the noisy list, who stole the ballpen, who's such a teacher's pet, who did not give his share with the class fund. And who would forget the conspiracies we had during quizzes, exams and recitations? We are always a family rather than a class. There's the president who never gets tired of shouting & scolding the biggest jock of the class and taking every responsibility and protecting us from accusing teachers. There's also the secretary who never gets tired of writing everything in the board and rewriting it on his notebook. What about the treasurer? Who hold all the money and being responsible enough to take care of it. And the peace makers? Who aren't really peace makers rather they are the first ones to create commotions. The whole class is also my teacher, they taught me friendship and laughter. I will miss these guys. I love them. I love you my dear classmates, I swear if I'd be given another chance I won't escape from the cleaner's schedule anymore.

And I also want thank the janitors who cleans the whole school and the guards who won't let us go out in class hours. I did have the chance to talk to them and back then, they told me stories about their life or sometimes they just give me silly knock knock jokes. They're also a part of my life.

Everything in this school is everything to me.

I lived half of my life here.

I once hated waking up early, going to school, studying and burning midnight oils and waking up early again to go to school.

I hated it and now, I want it all back. I want the old routine back.

If only I knew how sick I would be in the future, I should have appreciated every moments back then.

Yes, I left school because I got sick. And now, I'm dying. I don't really have much time with me anymore and maybe this is my last goodbye to everyone in my second home, with my second family.

Goodbye guys, I'll miss you.

- Risa

I stepped out of the school, I left it.

"So you're now on the third signature?" my boyfriend asks me as we head back home.

"Yeah, do you want to know who's next?"

- third signature -

"Time flies fast doesn't it?" grandma exclaims as she arranges the bouquet of flowers we brought for grandpa's tomb.

I bend down to help her, "Yeah, I could still picture him sitting on the porch with a cigarette in his hand..."

"...then I'll see him and scold him to stop his vices." she adds smiling bitterly at the nostalgia. Next week's gonna be my grandfather's 5th death anniversary. He died from ulcer and grandma misses him a lot. She visits his tomb almost everyday. Sometimes it crosses my mind a very troubling question, if I die will my boyfriend suffer like how my grandma suffers for the lost of her dear husband? Not just with my boyfriend but also with my entire family, will mom continue crying even after I die? Will dad still be sad when I'm gone? Will they be able to move on? Dying is not something that pains me, the thing that actually pains me is the thought of leaving those who are dear to me in anguish of my lost.

"I could still remember, grandma..." I mumble picturing flashbacks in my mind, "It was around 6 in the evening, summer of my 15th year..."

"Message sent." I mumbled after sending my message to Deyl, my boyfriend which by that time was just a simple friend to me and my feelings for him was still little and undiscovered. I waited for his response & the other's as well as I sat in my grandparent's bench on their porch. Our family decided to spend our summer vacation in our grandparent's house but for a teenager like me spending my summer in the oldies' house was very boring so I ended up wasting my summer with my beloved phone texting my friends from school. My grandparent's house were far from home, but not really far but yes, it is far --- from civilization. I mean it was in a small province where "fun place" for teens like me did not have a chance to exist.

"What is so fantastic with that piece of box?" I was kinda surprised when grandpa talked, I didnt realise that he was already sitting beside me. Who knows how long he was sitting there beside me, I was too busy texting.

I wore a sweet & slightly addled expression as I turned to him, "You said something, gramps?"

He shook his head in disbelief, "Having that box in your hand always,"

"Cellphone," I corrected.

"Whatever that is," the oldies don't really remember technology terms at all, "Holding it always and having your head bowed down all the time. My dear grandchild, you're missing out one of the greatest view in the world."

"Huh? What's the supposed to mean?"

He pointed forward and I look to where he's pointing, "That's why I don't like how time changed our life, technologies appeared and we worshipped it too much that we came to the point of bowing our heads to it. Technologies made us less of an observer, we don't appreciate the marvelous things around us anymore because we bow down our heads to superficial things."

I felt a sudden goosebump as I watched the sun setting down to rise up on the other side of the world. I never had the

chance to see a sunset ever in my life, that was the first time. I thank gramps for it, if it wasn't for him I'll be forever ignorant of the beauty of the sun waving goodbye. It was breathtaking, the sun slowly going down as the red orange color of the sky confirmed us that the day was already over.

"True beauties are just in front you, it's just a matter of raising your head and paying attention. If you bow down your head to superficial things, you sure are missing out half of the world." grandpa finished his sentence with a puff on his cigarette.

There was nothing special that day on the porch with gramps but I don't know why it never left my mind. It's a pigment of my memory with gramps. Since then, watching the sunset became a hobby to me.

We went back home in the afternoon. Home means Grandma's house. Yes, I went here on my own, I rode the train. I decided to pay her a visit and also to ask her for her signature. The third signature goes to her.

"So how's your mom?" she hands me my cup of tea as she sits beside me on that same porch I sat with gramps that summer. This old rustic oak bench is in dire need of replacing, the slabs creak a bit when rested upon. The thin boards have grown withered and splintered. It was white, now it's almost grey. Its color faded as grandpa did and soon, *I'll fade too.*

"Mom is fine, her tummy's growing big. Doesn't lack a lot," I meant her tummy, her tummy's ready for delivery. I forgot to mention that she's pregnant, for almost 8 months. Anytime, she might give birth. That's why sometimes it worries me that her depression about my illness may cause a problem with her pregnancy. I don't want something bad to happen to my mom neither to my baby sister, we're already sure that's it's a baby girl and mom grant me the privilege to name her. I haven't told them yet what name I want for her but I already have something in mind.

"Oh, I see. I'm excited for it. And how about you?" she smiles bitterly to me. She knows about my deadline and she's also sad about it.

"I'm physically ill but I'm emotionally fine," I said honestly.

"So what brings you here? I know you Risa, you are not the type of person to visit a far and boring place for nothing."

I run my fingers to my hair and watch my feet sway back and forth, "I'll be asking for your signature, grandma."

"Signature?"

I explain to her my signature collecting to bargain with God. She actually find my idea amazing and creepy at the same time.

"Then tell me, why do you want to ask for my signature?"

"Because when I die and if I don't remember you and I happen to meet grandpa, how can I say 'hi' to him for you?" grandma got surprised with what I said that she had to cover her mouth out of astonishment and her tears came down one by one, rapidly.

"It's really weird," she has a hard time speaking as her voice trembles from crying, "In life, you don't really know who's next in line. You absolutely can't judge the age, it's just... in an instance God will blow your candle and whisper to you 'it's time'. I never imagined that my granddaughter will go first, will leave before I do."

She pulls me, hugs me tightly and never stopped crying, "You are too young to die. You are too young..."

"I wonder why God is taking you away already... It should've been me, atleast I'm already ready to die but why you? You're barely 20!"

I smile beneath her arms, "God has reasons, I don't know what reasons there are but I don't question it anymore. I trust Him and in the end, it's not how long you lived but its how short you regretted. D'you remember what you told me, grandma? You said that we all are God's children. I've been thinking about it these past few weeks, we all are God's children and the World is just our playground where God left us all to play and have fun. We play with each other, have fun, get hurt, help one another, eat when we get exhausted and play again. The world is our playground, God left us here to enjoy and in the end of the day, He'll come back to tell us, 'it's time to go home' and we could'nt argue because God is taking us away from the playground because He knows that we can't stay in the playground before it gets dark or else we'll get into trouble and God doesn't want it. He knows when is the right time to pick us from this playground and to take us back home."

"Since when did you start reading the bible?"

I giggle, "I haven't grandma, I'm too lazy for that but I think I'm one of those type of people who gets to know God when on the verge of dying. I don't know why but I never felt His presence this close to my heart, maybe because I need Him?" I remove myself from grandma's hug to sip on my tea I placed on my side on the bench, "I'm not angry with God, I don't wanna argue with Him, I don't want to ask Him why me of all people, why so sudden and such questions. Actually, He might seem to be cruel for taking me on such a young age but truth is, I think He's been nice to me. He gave me the time to live before dying unlike others who died without even a warning, those who died on a car crash, unexpected robbery and murder, falling from a high place, food poison, unpredictable natural disasters etc. Those who died in that way did not have the chance to prepare themselves, to repent from their wrongdoings, to say sorry to those they have hurt, to tell the persons who are dear to them how much they love them, to do things they wanted badly... they did not have the chance but I have those chances, God is giving me the opportunity, He's giving me enough time that's why I can still call myself much more fortunate than the others. **I have no reasons to argue with God, none at all.** I actually owe Him for this chances."

I felt grandma patting my head like a kid, she just kept on patting me without saying anything. We remain in silence as the sun sets and the sky changes its color. The nostalgia with grandpa keeps on playing as I watch the sun goes down, how fast time flies... it's almost 5years grandpa since I last saw you and soon enough, we'll meet again. I take another sip on my already cold tea and place my head to grandma's shoulder as she still continues to pat my head, sometimes brushing my hair that makes me feel so sleepy.

Then she whispers, "When you meet your grandpa, tell him that I miss him so much. Its so lonely when there's no one you can scold for their vices."

I giggle, "**Will do.**"

- 4th & 5th Signatures -

"We're going to the zoo, aren't you excited?"

I put on her blouse as she jumps with full enthusiasm on my bed, she keeps on chanting 'Zoo! Zoo! Zoo!'. Even it's hard

to brush her hair as she jumps nonstop, I still managed to give her a neat ponytail with a small red ribbon. Her name's Michelle but we call her Chill since it sounds cuter that way. She's my 6yrs old little sister, she's clueless about my illness. She's too young to understand it.

"Aren't you guys done yet?" impatient as always, my little brother whose not so little anymore since he's already 18 appears on my room's door.

"Coming kuya Eros!" Chill jumps from the bed to run to his big brother and pulls him by the hand but before going she turns to me and orders me excitedly, "Ate Risa, let's goooo!"

(A/N: for non-Filipino readers, "kuya" is a term for "big brother" & "ate" is a term for "big sister" <-- I just felt the need to write it since I'm used to writing with respect with bigger siblings. Hope you understand the tradition. ^_^)

I laugh at her incredible enthusiasm, "Yeah, let's go."

"I'm going to buy drinks," Eros told me as we rest on one of the benches in the zoo after a long & tiring walk just to see different animals, I just nod to him and he went to buy our drinks at the nearest stall.

"Ate Risa, balloons!"

"Wait Chill!" I got alarmed when Chill suddenly ran away to go to the balloon vendor. I try to catch her up because I saw her tripped and she starts crying on the floor.

"Hey, are you ok?" as soon as I reached her, I stood her up and check her knees and elbows for bruises and found none, "You shouldn't ran like that all of a sudden, you got me worried."

She keeps on crying with her knuckles on her eyes, she must've been hurt from that fall. I try removing her hands away from her face and wipe her tears with my handkerchief, "Now, now, don't cry. Everything's gonna be alright, the pain will be gone if you stop crying. C'mon Chill, ate Risa's gonna buy you some cotton candy and a balloon too."

She stops from crying and her smile widens, "Really? I want the blue one!"

"I'll buy you the balloon you prefer, c'mon," I pull her by the hand as we head to the balloon vendor.

The beauty of being a kid is when you fall to the ground and get yourself hurt, there would always be someone to pull you up and will tell you that everything's going to be alright and the pain will fade. And when you're a kid, simple things like cotton candies and balloons can cheer you up already. Nothing's really better than being a simple minded kid.

Thing is, when I was little I never appreciated what beauty I was experiencing. I was always in a hurry to grow up. And now that I've grown up, how I wish to turn back. I've wasted my time reaching for the future, I know I'm somewhat regretting but I won't commit the same mistake again, I won't waste my remaining time looking back repenting for the lost. In life no matter what we did in the past or whatever's in store for us in the future in the end, what really counts is the present time --- which will make the past better and will identify our future.

"Chill," I pull out the folded contract in my pocket and also a pen, "Can you write your name here?"

"What is this, ate Risa?" she asked as she examines the paper and I'm pretty sure that she doesn't understand it. She's still not good in reading and as well with writing that's why when she signed the contract, she has a very crooked handwriting but it really made me smile. Out of all the signatures I've collected, hers is the cutest.

"Thank you Chill, remember when I told you that I'm going to a far away land?" she nods to tell me that she remembers, "Well, ate Risa's about to go and I want some remembrance from you."

"You're going already? If you want a remembrance, I'll give you my teddy."

I pat her head, "In the place I'm going, I can't bring anything with me and that means no teddies too."

"Well, you cant bring that paper too?" she meant the contract she just signed.

"Ssh, I'll sneak it in with me."

"What about the teddy? Cant you sneak it in, too?"

"The paper's small so its not that visible but the teddy's big so its gonna be too obvious."

After some time, Eros went back with sodas in hand and a bucket of popcorns. We ate and rested for awhile and after

that, we continue with this zoo tour.

We head back home at around 6pm and Chill is surely tired as she got knocked out as soon as we got on the bus. Mom prepared us dinner but I brought Chill first to my room and lay her to my bed. I cover her with my blanket and watch her sleeping face, "When I leave, my room will be yours so take good care of it okay? Always make sure that you tidy up your room, fold your blankets well every morning. And when you grow up, you can use my clothes. I hope we have the same fashion taste."

I remove my heart necklace that mom gave me when I was little, I've been wearing this necklace for more than 15years and now I'm giving it to Chill. I put it on her neck as she sleeps, I kiss her on the forehead and my tears start running down & dropping to her chubby cheeks, *"Ate Risa loves you, remember that always Chill."*

At dinner, we just told mom & dad how energetic Chill was and for exchange, they also told us how we were when we were kids everytime they brought us to the zoo. A dinner full of nostalgias and soon, this dinner night will also be just a nostalgia.

"Thank you, Eros." I smile at him as we sit on the hammock of our house's backyard. He gives me the 'what-for' look, "I know going to a zoo with your sisters is not your thing."

Eros, as far as I know him, is a rebel kid. I don't really know much about him because the day he turned 13, he became so distant. He used to be a cheerful person then he changed into someone who always wear a frown on his face, then there will be times that he'll go back home with wounds on his face and there was even a time wherein the police came to our house to arrest him for almost killing someone but luckily he got bailed out since he's still a minor. He also flunked school for about 2 times. I don't know what got into him, we question if its because of his peer or he's just undergoing adolescence's rebel genes. Who knows, but Eros gonna be Eros he's still sweet when it comes to us, his sisters.

"Yeah, the zoo was boring but that's the last time I'll be taking out my big sister out on a date, right?"

I cling to his arm and lay my head on his shoulder, "You're the sweetest brother. Please take care of your sisters, don't let them get hurt. When Chill grows up, I know she's going to be a beautiful girl and guys gonna go crazy over her and then she'll fall inlove but make sure to break the face of the guy who will break her heart."

Then I paused and laugh, "Nah, I'm just kidding. Don't break his face, I don't want you to hurt anybody anymore. Can you do this favor for me, Eros... stop fighting and stop being a rebel?"

I did not receive a response, he just watch the starry sky in silence like there is something written on the sky then after a moment he speaks to me, "Okay, I'll stop rebelling but I won't stop fighting. You know what sis, fighting is not bad as long as you know that what you're fighting for is something that you know is worth it and right. And you are the best fighter I've ever known in my life, sis. You're stronger than me."

I saw a tear fell on his eyes but he wipes it in haste maybe because he doesn't want me to see him crying, he's embarrassed. He cough to clear his voice that seems to croak anytime, "You're the strongest person I've ever met, you're fighting 'til the end. Since the day you knew about your sickness, I never saw you giving up not even for a second. If I were in your position, I might not be able to reach the point you've already reached. Death did not scare you, it's already in front of you but still you can smile. There's really nothing to do about it, huh?"

"Death, death, death. What's the big deal about it?" I smile to him, "Death nor any sickness can control your life, they would enter in your life but you should never succumb yourself to them. Hey Eros, I'd like to ask you to sign something..."

I show him the contract but did not explain it to him even if he was questioning it. He did sign it even if he doesn't know what it was for. Then I asked him to take out his phone and to take a picture of us together, and once done he set the picture as his phone's wallpaper.

"Our last picture together eh, Ate Risa?"

"Yeah, promise me not to change your phone's wallpaper until you found the girl you're sure you'll love for the rest of your life. And everytime you're thinking of hurting that girl, just look at that picture because everytime you hurt a girl, you'll be hurting your sister too."

"I'll surely miss you, ate Risa." he hugs me as he cries like he used to when we we're little. People grow up but there will always be a part of us that will remain.

5 Signatures to go and I'm almost through.

6th & 7th Signature

"Okay, enjoy your day. Bye Chill!"

"Bye mom, bye ate Risa!" my little sister waves her hand and turns immediately to go to her classroom to play with her classmates.

After mom and I had accompanied Chill to her school, we went to the hospital to have my check up. I don't really want to go but mom's very insistent.

"I really recommend to confine her here in the hospital. It'll be much better, atleast we'll be able to control her conditions."

"I don't want to! I'll never lock myself in this building!" I detest it when they try pursuing me to jail me here. I don't want to stay in the hospital no matter how sick I feel. I don't want to die helpless in one of those white rooms, that's pathetic!

"Risa," I felt mom's hands cupped mine, "Can you give it a second thought?"

"Yeah, give it a second thought. Your condition has gotten worse than before and if we don't get to control it regularly, who knows what will happen?"

"Exactly," I retorted, "No one knows what will happen so you guys dont have the slightest right to decide for me. And you said it yourselves that I won't last long, that I have a near deadline already so tell me, what's the sense of a hospital? Are you guys sure that you want to prolong my life or prolong your money?!"

I stood up and barged out of the room as I heard mom excusing herself to the doctor and follows me after.

"That was very rude of you, Risa." mom starts to scold me as soon as we get in the car, "Why did y---"

"Mom," I can't take it anymore, I lay my head on her shoulder and started crying, "Why too early?"

I might be trying to act tough and kept on saying that dying is normal that I have nothing to freak out. Even if I'm trying to act normal, even if I'm trying to boost myself up, even if I seem to have accepted everything... Deep inside me, there's a part that's collapsing one by one.

"I hate myself right now, after all the efforts of showing you guys that I'm fine, that there's nothing to worry about here I am crying like some stupid desperate person. I was full of hope but all of a sudden, I felt a an unexplainable loneliness and all my hopes seem to be out of reach now."

"Every strong person has their time of defeat and you Risa, you are a strong person who is in your time of defeat. Learn to accept that not everytime you can feel so strong, there will always be those times that you'll feel like giving up but hey, everyone has their own moments of giving up so you shouldnt depress yourself like that. I, myself, felt like giving up for a lot of times. Since the day I knew your illness, I never stopped from crying and you know that, you have witnessed how many tears I have shed for you. But you know what's the reason why I can still make it through the day? Do you know who can still make me smile even after all those tears? It's the same person who made me cry, its you. You are my inspiration, you are the reason why I can still make it through the day no matter how much sadness I'm feeling. You know why? It's because I never saw you cry for your condition, it was always me who cry for you and to be honest, I feel kind of glad to see you finally cry because it was always you to comfort me and now it's my turn to comfort you. You can always cry whenever you feel, Risa. I'm here for you, I'll try my best to be a great mom."

"No one is strong alone, everyone has their moment of falling and there will always be someone to stand you up. Don't be afraid to feel such emotions, you are not alone."

I listened to each and every word she said and I felt like crying harder than before, "I don't feel like going yet. *I'm not yet ready.*"

"No one is, but you can always ask God to extend your time even for a little. Just try asking, He'll listen."

I just closed my eyes and cried nonstop. No matter how I try to stop the tears from falling, they just keep on flowing.

Oh God, please don't take me yet. Just a little more time, I beg you.

After that small talk with mom in the car, we decided not to waste time on dramas and we head to the mall for some shopping slash bonding time. It has been a long time since I last went shopping with mom, I usually hang out with my friends so I don't really have much of that so called family bonding.

We ate lunch at a fancy restaurant inside the mall, checked on the shoes and bags at some favorite boutique shops, did some groceries and most of all, we bought some maternal stuff.

"Which crib do you think is the cutest?" she's asking me between identical cribs that is only differentiated with their

colors, blue and red. I chose the blue one since it's my favorite color. We just asked the shop to have the stuff we bought delivered to our house.

We roam around the shop for a little bit more and as we walk around, a pair of socks caught my attention. I pull my mom to the part of the baby socks, "Mom, can I pick her first pair of socks?"

"Sure, go ahead."

I rummage at the pile of socks, I feel so giddy with all these tiny socks. They're tinier than my palm and that'll be the length of my future baby sister's feet. How cute! After some time, I decided to get the simplest white socks for my future baby sister, "Mom, I want that this pair of socks will be the first pair she'll wear. It will be sort of a remembrance from me to her so I hope she'll keep it even after she grows up. I want her to know that she has a big sister besides Chill that gave her these socks," I hand it to her and decided to pick out a piece of paper and also a pen in my pocket, "And mom... can you please sign this?"

"What is this?" she was about to unfold it but I stopped her.

"Mom, please just sign it without looking." I pleaded and with that, she agreed to sign it without arguments.

After she signed it and gave it back to me, we are about to go to the cashier when she suddenly grabbed me by the arm as she held her tummy with her other hand, "Wait R-risa... A-aaah!!!"

"M-mom? What's going on?" I start to panic as I realise that maybe she's about to deliver the baby.

"Risa, b-bring me to the nearest hospital! Quick!"

I was right, it's time already. I hurriedly ask help to the staff of the store department and they kindly lend us a hand to bring mom to the nearest hospital.

--

"She's beautiful, isn't she?" my dad who's beside me asked as we watch my baby sister from the window glass. She's just some hours old, she's so little and so fragile. She's like an angel on a heavenly slumber.

"Yeah," I replied still enchanted with my sister's sleeping face.

I got distracted when I heard my father chuckled, "What is it dad?"

"Nothing, I just remembered the day you were born."

"I just got home from work when your mom felt that you're about to get out of her tummy so I had had to drive her in rush to the hospital. It was crazy," dad narrates with full nostalgia, as if he has the past rolling in front of him. Dad has this smile on his face that I don't usually see because my dad is a serious and a busy man who always has his face either covered with a newspaper or some sort of documents, "Funny thing is, I was really in need of the comfort room that time. I have eaten something rotten I think, it was also an emergency case for my tummy that time. But it was a tragedy for me because I badly needed to take it out from my tummy and so does your mom that needed to take you out from hers. But of course, I managed to bring her on the hospital safe and sound and have taken care of my own tummy afterwards. But the thing I have not managed is seeing you getting out of her and hearing your mom screaming and when it was done and I heard your cry, I actually felt a great relief and collapsed then and there. The next thing I know, I was laying on the bed next to your mom's and I had the most beautiful scene in front of me, your mom holding you with so much care in her arms with a smile on her face. It was the craziest and at the same time, happiest moment of my life. That was the day I finally became a dad."

I don't really hug my dad and he doesn't as well, but sometimes embarrassment goes second when the love you feel is stronger. Who knows if this would be the last time but I would surely miss this tall man who always work hard to buy us our morning cereals.

And if mom owns the 6th signature, dad has the 7th.

"I could have named her Hope or Miracle since she's the life that would substitute mine."

"Then why did you decide to name her Happy?"

"Because I know my baby sister will bring happiness to everyone after the sorrow I will bring to all of you after my death."

As someone goes and leave, another comes. That's why there are two types of doors in this world, the one for the "entrance" and the other for the "exit".

- 8th Signature -

I was woken up by someone knocking at the door. I open my eyes and wonder, "Why am I in this white room?"

Then the person who knocked at the door came in. It was my boyfriend, he smiles weakly at me as he waves his hand and greets me in his way, "Hi, gorgeous. I see you're awake already."

"I was sleeping until you knocked and disturbed my slumber."

He walks to me and sits on the free space of my bed then he brushes loose strands of my hair in my face with his fingers and puts it in place at the back of my ear, "I prefer disturbing your sleep rather than you, never waking up."

I can hear footsteps from the outside breaking the silence around, suddenly I heard a cry of a child as well. On second thought there wasn't any silence in the first place, if I listen more carefully, the outside is actually noisy. Aside from the footsteps that go back and forth and the cry of a child, I can also hear some people coughing and uttering unintelligible words and there are also phones beeping and ringing one after another.

"Why am I here?" I look at him straight in the eyes somewhat accusing. Funny, I am in a place I said I would never stay even if I die --- the hospital. Irritating as I've always thought, the drab white colour of the hospital walls never fail to throw a bucket of cold water over my spirit. Instead of feeling well, I feel like having nausea anytime due to that unpleasant smell stereotype hospitals have --- is it from some kind of medication, or is it from all that bleach?

"We didn't really want to take you here without your concern but 3days ago, you just collapsed after vomiting blood and after several trials of waking you up, but to no avail, we started to panic. I called my dad to check on you and he said, you need proper medication that could only be given in the hospital and that explains why you're here. You were unconscious for 3days, I thought you won't wake up anymore. I'm glad to see you awake again, you scared the hell out of me Risa."

"Really," I utter without confidence and look around me, four corners dictating how trapped you are in life, a table beside me with fruits untouched and fresh flowers that ought to die the next day and be replaced with another that will repeat the cycle. There's also a television at the upper left corner of the room, not so modern in it's box shape, I bet it lacks good channels. Beside the television, there is a wall clock that has the small hand pointing to ten and the longer hand to seven or maybe eight?

I turn at my left side to see the open window few meters away from me, from the outside the cold and piercing air blows the pale turquoise curtains that is the same color with my bedsheet.

"Are you cold? Do you want me to close the window?" my boyfriend might have notice my shivers so he stood up to close the window as I nod to him. I shiver not because I'm really feeling cold but I'm quite terrified that maybe one day the wind will take me away as I just become a part of the unseen, untouchable and forgotten.

"How bad is it?" I asked him while he closes the window, he turns around not understanding my question.

"How bad is what?"

"You know," I smile at him, encouraging him to tell me, "My condition."

"Oh," he turns his back to me this time maybe looking outside from the window, "Fine. Yeah, you're fine."

I laugh weakly, sounding almost forced and stupid. I knew it, when he says fine... it's not. That's the most comprehensible lie when someone's sick, "You think I'm going to buy that? Tell me the truth."

"Truth?" he repeats the last word I said, turns to me and look at me straight in the eyes. He paused for a while adding an unpleasant tension in the room, I pleaded silently looking in his uncertain eyes. After a while, glistening tears form in his eyes and hover for a moment before they fell wetly upon his cheek. His tear explained me everything even without

saying anything.

"I understand."

I understand, I understand, I understand.

Why are we even worrying for the worst, haven't we been there a lot of times? From the moment I got sick, there was never any hope but only miracles to save me... But what does miracle really means?

"Risa," his voice seemed caught in his throat as he struggles to form the words, "I'm sorry, I'm really sorry."

I call the name of this guy in front of me crying like a mere child lost in the city, extend him my arms and asked him to come to me. He obediently did and as my arms reached him, I gently placed my hand on his back and the other hand brushing his black hair. A big guy crying in my arms, crying for me not caring how unmanly he might look in front of the girl he loves. I whisper to his ears, "What are you sorry for? Its not as if the entire world, and all of its beauty, had come to an end."

As we sat and cry here on my hospital bed, a thought came into mind... how many people used this bed and cried for death? I wonder what the hospital staff thinks everytime they change bedsheets and washes it, just how many tears poured down on this bed... just how many tears have been washed away? If I die here in this same bed, in this same bedsheet, how painful could it be for the people that cares for me to see the bedsheet being removed in this bed? Simple changing of bedsheet can mean nothing to a lot but in this world, in this moment, 1 out of 1billion might be crying because as he says goodbye to a bedsheet he says goodbye to someone too.

When my boyfriend calmed down, I decided to ask him, "Did you bring my contract with you?"

Because I did not expect that I would collapsed suddenly and be brought to the hospital afterwards, I left the paper of signatures in my house, in my room to be specific. He shook his head, "Nope, why? Is it my turn to sign?"

"Do me a favor. After your today's visit, before heading home can you please pass by my house and get the contract in the drawer next to my bed and bring it tomorrow morning to me? You can sign it too as soon as you get it on hand, you may peek if you want but it will always be our secret ok?"

"Is this your last favor?"

"Not really," because my last favor to him would be to move on with life without me when I leave this not circle world and to love find another girl to love, to take care of, to marry someday and create a healthy and happy family with her. I would want to be that girl but I know I'll never be, the greatest feeling in this world is to love and be loved back in return but that could also be the most painful feeling when you are loving someone and that someone loves you back but something called "death" separates you from one another. The love for each other or the person fades, eitherways, its a sad ending.

My boyfriend is the owner of the 8th signature I want to bargain with God, I had listed 10 names in that contract which means 2 more signatures to go. Will this bargaining thing really work? I hope these signatures will not go to waste... *God, can you hear me?*

10 Signatures to Bargain with God A story written by HaveYouSeenThisGirL

9th & 10th Signatures
(FINAL POST)

Feels like I'm about to detach myself from this world.

It's past midnight and lights must be turned off already. I should be sleeping at this moment of time but I just can't sleep, there's too much silence that I can't concentrate on sleeping. And another thing, once I close my eyes thoughts start to cloud my head and it's very irritating for me. My thoughts won't just leave me alone.

I want to escape.

I want to find the 9th signature owner already so I'll be done with this contract since the 10th signature owner is not very

hard for me to find.

"Before everything else," I reach my phone on my sidetable and I turn on the lights of my room.

I comb my hair with my fingers as I turn on the camera of my phone and switch it to video mode.

"Okay, it's ready," I say as I hold the phone to me and brush some loose strands of hair away from my face and place it to the back of my ear, "H-hi!"

I laugh afterwards for stuttering while saying a simple greeting, it's as if I'm on the center of a stage with a big crowd when reality is I'm just alone here talking with my phone and no one sees me. I feel nervous nonetheless.

"Uhhh... My name is Risa Magdayo. My existence is caused by Rick & Maria Magdayo, my beloved parents. I am debtful to them because they have been good parents to me and they took good care of me from the very beginning, since the day I was born. I never felt unloved in all of my years of existence because of them, they made me feel that no matter how drastic life would be for me there will still be someone like them to hug me and show me that I will never be alone with every battle I'll make with life. Then I am blessed with two, I mean three siblings, " I suddenly remember the new born baby, "Eros is 2years younger than me, he's not actually my biological brother but nevertheless I love him as if we have the same blood running in us. I never and would never look at him as if he's an outcast of the family just because he's adopted so I wish he'd stop treating his self as if he's not a part of the family. I wish he won't feel lonely anymore, I know it's hard for him to have not met his real parents but I hope that someday he'll realise that we're here always for him and we DO love him. So Eros if chances will lead you to this video, listen to me... please don't be hard on yourself? No one is pushing you away so stay with us, stay with the family and stop rebelling."

"To my 6years old little sister Chill Magdayo, hi there Chill! I don't know what age you'll have when you'll actually understand this video but no matter what, please remember that Ate Risa loves you more than your teddy bears can love you okay? Ohyeah, I'm about to head to the far far away land Chill so please take care of my clothes, my accessories, my make ups, my shoes, my bags and all my things. I'll be leaving them to you and you can have them all so take good care of them. And also, take good care of our baby sister Happy. You're now the "Ate", the bigger sister. You're responsible to teach her how to dress properly, to brush her hair and tie it up like I always do to your hair and you must teach her how to tie her shoelaces as well, okay? I wish I could be there to see you both grow into lovely ladies and have your handsome boyfriends escorting you to proms and such," I wipe a tear that escaped from my eye and continue, "Speaking of handsome boyfriend..."

I try to smile and force out an energetic tone, "Hey you boyfriend of mine! I'm pretty right? No, I'm beautiful. I believe I am because you said so yourself. No matter how pale, thin and frail looking I am now because of my illness still you continue to tell me I've grown much more beautiful. Thank you, thank you for showing me that I've loved and chosen the right person. I really wish I can marry you and have kids but let's move on, that won't happen to me but that might happen to you to another someone so search for the right girl. I love you."

With tears falling down from my eyes, I place the phone near my face and kissed the camera then move it away again so I'll be able to capture my now ugly crying face, "For those I love and for those who love me and will continue to love me even if I'm gone, thank you and take care of yourself guys. I might have lived short but I am grateful I've not wasted a second of it. I will miss you guys, I love you."

I stop the recording of the camera and save it to a specific video folder then left it on my bed as I put my jacket and slippers on. I've already planned to escape the hospital through my room's window with my bedsheet and blanket tied up together, I'm not really on a high floor actually I'm just on the second floor so my bedsheet and blanket are long enough for me to touch the ground safely.

Where am I going?

To where my feet drag me, to a place called somewhere.

Actually my plan is to find the 9th signature owner before my body betrays me, I don't really feel strong enough to walk properly anymore. I just ask for the help of the walls to support me from walking or rather staggering.

I know it's hard for me to see people in a time like this, it's already dark and people are already sleeping but a place called 7eleven caught my eyes then a smile forms into my lips. A convenient store open 24hours, just the right place for me to find the 9th signature owner.

Must be wondering who the owner is of the 9th signature? Well, the space is actually reserved for a "stranger", yes the owner is a stranger... a someone or anyone. I don't know why but I guess I want to meet someone I've never met before dying and bargain my memory with him or her as well with God.

As I enter the convenient store the security guard looks at me in a weird doubtful way, maybe he's wondering why I'm on slippers. I just ignore him and continue to walk and went to the cashier girl to buy my favorite chocolate hershey bar, luckily I have some money with me in my jacket's pocket. I am not allowed to eat chocolates but who cares, I badly want to eat it even for the last time.

After buying my chocolate bar, I went to eat my chocolate on the same table where a guy eats a burger at a time like this and has a coke in can on the table. He looks at me as if questioning me why of all the vacant tables there are in the store am I sharing on the same table.

"Hi," I smile at him after taking a bite of my chocolate bar.

"Uhh... hello," he says awkwardly. He looks like the type who doesn't trust strangers.

"Don't be afraid of me, I'm not someone who has an attention to steal something from you or to do you bad things so relax and talk with me. Look, I'm so frail looking because I'm sick and I just escaped from the hospital. I just badly want to talk to someone so I hope you wouldn't mind..."

He observes me for a while and nods afterwards, "Okay, we can talk but that's all."

"Thank you," I smile at him and start a conversation. He told me his name is Jason, he's a college student. I asked him why he's eating in a convenient store at a time like this and he replied that he just finished from his part time job which happens to be in a host club. I was a little bit taken aback when I heard that but it didn't matter anyway for me because so what if that is his job, right? He told me he needs money to continue his studies because he has no parents anymore to support him. He's really nice because he open up his self to me even at first he was very doubtful of me. I learned a lot of things about him and vice versa. We enjoyed chatting with each other and he's sorry that I am dying but I told him that there's nothing to be sorry about.

I ask him to sign the contract since I've already told him about it. He liked the idea and he told me that maybe when he's about to die too he might do the same thing because maybe it might actually work but then he took back what he said and told me that it won't work for him because he knows heaven is not his destination for heaven doesn't accept people like him who works for club to entertain people with body.

I pat him on his shoulder and said, "For the first meeting, I have to tell you that I don't see you as a bad person. You still have a long life so chances for you are still big so don't lose hope."

"Yeah, maybe." he scratches the back of his head unconvinced with what I said, "So who owns the last signature?"

Before I could even say it, I heard a shout and a random guy with the face covered and a gun in hand barges in that causes fear to all of us in the convenient store. The shout came from the cashier girl who saw how the random guy hit the security guard that got him out of commission.

"Shut your mouths or you'll die!" he shouts and threatens us, there is only me, Jason, the unconscious guard, and the cashier girl there. The random guy looks at me and Jason and orders us, "Come close here or I'll shoot you both!"

We follow him and went near the cashier then he points the gun to us, "Give me all your moneys! And you, take out all whats there in the cashier! Quick or I'll blast your head!"

"Aren't you being too harsh with your words?"

"Risa, no..." Jason tries to stop me when I step forward to the random guy but I ignore him.

"Step back, don't come near me or I'll shoot you."

"Shoot me," I said as I step near him, "Go ahead. I am not afraid to die, I'm gonna die anyway from my illness so what fear should I have if you shoot me?"

He got startled and to me, he seems to have more fear with him than with us, "You don't really want to do this, don't you?"

"This, maybe, is your first time to hold up a store?" I smile at him, "You don't seem to be a bad guy."

"What the f*** are you saying! Shut up! Shut up! I'll shoot you I swear!" he said with hands trembling.

I reach him and hold the upper part of the gun, "Don't do this, you will only ruin not only the lives of the people here but also your life."

"How should you know! I'm not ruining my life here, I'm saving a life so give me your money and I'll scam right away and we're all good with that!" he shouts at me terrified and angry.

"What do you need the money for?"

"The heck you care!!! SHUT UP! Please shut up!" he looks like he wants to shoot me but he doesn't have the guts because surely he doesn't have any intention to kill anyone, he just needs the money.

"Calm down, shhh." I want him to stop this, "Tell me why you need the money, I might be able to help you..."

He then out of frustration tells me something, "My mom... my mom, she needs to have her heart operated but... but the f** king doctors are asking me an amount I don't know where to get! Do you get me?! So just give me the damn money and let's get this thing done before a cop comes!"

He looks desperate, I knew it he needs the money for a reason... it's for his mom.

"But you could not be as unfair as you can be, don't take away the money of others for your own reasons. What if the

cashier girl," I point to the girl in the cashier who is shivering in fear, "What if she also have financial problems and if you take all the money in the cashier she might lose her job or she won't have enough salary in the end of the month?"

"And you see this guy," I point to Jason, "He's here because he's eating his dinner. Apparently he just finished his part time job in a host club. He works at night and goes to school at day. He works for his tuition and here you go stealing what he just earned for this night? Don't you think you're being unfair? We all have financial problems but this is not the solution for it, I assure you that this is not a solution so please give up the gun and stop this."

"NO! I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU SAY! NO! I DON'T WANT TO LISTEN! SHUT UP PLEASE, SHUT UP!"

"Your mom will not be happy to hear you robbing a store in order to get money,"

"SHUT UP!!! I'LL SHOOT YOU IF YOU DONT SHUT YOUR MOUTH! SHUT UP PLEASE SHUT UP!"

"Your mom will never be happy... she wouldn't want her son to end up as a criminal... don't do this..."

"I TOLD YOU TO SHUT UP!!!"

And that's it, a loud bang echoed in the store and I felt something that hit against my tummy.

"No, no! What have I done!" the gun fell from his hands as I fell on the ground, I can still hear him cry as he regrets pulling the trigger, "I told you to shut up... you didn't listen. No, what have I done... what have I done..."

He repeats those words with sobs accompanying it.

"Risa, Risa!" I hear Jason calling for me repeatedly but its seems like the volume is decreasing and I'm hearing his call vaguely. I can feel blood in my hands as I hold my tummy, I should feel pain but instead I feel nothing...

Before its too late, I take out the contract and as well as the pen from my pocket and with shaking hands I try to sign it, the contract is already smeared by my blood but I don't mind. I have to sign the 10th signature because my visions are

starting to blurr and I'm already vomiting blood.

Yes, I am the 10th signature owner of my own contract. I want to bargain myself with God, I don't want to forget what I have been in this world when I was still living. Practically, I am bargaining everything to God and I don't even know if He'll agree with this but they say there's no harm in trying.

I don't even know what awaits me after dying...

I don't even know if He's true... or He does exist...

I created a contract not knowing if there's really heaven or somewhere to go to after a person die.

Or even if there is, I am not even sure if I'm going to heaven or to the other place...

I am not sure what awaits me and funny thing is, I thought I'm gonna die because of my illness but who could've thought that I'll die this way? We all expected that my illness will be the one to take me away from this world but it's not.

Nothing in this world is so sure so is that the same with the next world? Uncertain.

Not even done signing, my head spins and I fell on the contract as my vision turns black. Is this the end? *Goodbye.*

- FIN -

A/N: There is a story about Risa's adopted brother "Eros Magdayo" entitled "SHE DIED" written in Taglish. That story will be posted January 2012 so I hope you guys will support it and try to read it too. Lovelots. <3